

William Gilbert

Hello and thank you for giving me the time to speak with you this evening. My name is William Gilbert and I am the Clinical Director for the Supportive Housing for Families program operated by The Connection, Inc. The majority of the clients served by Supportive Housing for Families have myriad economic, health, mental health, substance use and trauma-related problems when they enter our program. Our case managers play a critical role in locating providers to address these problems and guide them through the state's system of care. Our staff are consistent and skilled advocates for the children and parents served; they make certain that their needs are being met. Without the case management to arrange those services, our clients could not live independently and would remain at risk for homelessness and as a result would not be able to meet the needs of their children. After our clients become stabilized, the program can provide financial support with the program's DCF bridge funding to assist in paying for rent, furniture, utility bills and other basic needs. Throughout this process, our staff partner with DCF staff and administrators to assure that our clients are receiving all the assistance they need to successfully parent their children and eventually leave DCF care. This integration of service provision and close collaboration with DCF is what makes Supportive Housing for Families a unique and nationally acclaimed child welfare level of care.

The Connection Inc. fears that the reallocation of Supportive Housing for Family bridge funds from DCF to DECD would have an immediate and detrimental effect on the clients served by our program. Since our bridge funding is integrated and is intended to be used flexibly we are able to meet the complex needs of the clients we serve. As the reallocation is proposed, we are concerned that we would lose that flexibility so crucial to the success of our clients. We are currently providing services to 412 adults with 957 children. If funds were reallocated to DECD, we fear that these children and their parents would lose or face a substantial loss of services we are currently providing. DECD would be in the unenviable position of responding to service needs that are beyond the scope of its mandate. In addition, many of the parents served have children who are in not in their custody due to the parents' inability to find safe and affordable housing. Thus, reunification could be delayed and families could remain on the DCF rolls for an extended period. This predicament would result in increased costs to DCF. We fear that with the reduction of funds, we would be forced to decrease the number of clients served, and as a result, many DCF clients would be denied to access to invaluable services provided by Supportive Housing for Families. The loss of our services would have a ripple effect throughout the state, resulting in increased costs for other state agencies such as DMHAS and DSS. Therefore, ultimately, the Supportive Housing for Families program is a cost saving program, helping parents and their children avoid higher and more costly levels of care. The Supportive Housing for Families program needs to remain intact to continue promoting the DCF goal of reunifying families and making them whole. Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.